



UMB News

CURE Scholars Inspired by Summer Internship at BD

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While most high school students spent their summers relaxing by the pool or hanging out with friends, the [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) (UMB) CURE Scholars in Cohort 1 were hard at work preparing for their senior year. This final year of high school is a pivotal time for students to beef up and enhance their college applications with extracurriculars and unique experiences. That's why Ayishat Yussuf, Markia Eubanks, Princaya Sanders, and Jaden Buggs spent their summer at a rewarding, professional internship at [Becton Dickinson \(BD\)](#), a Fortune 500 company that specializes in medical technology.

"I am blessed because many people don't have opportunities like this at such a young age," said Yussuf, a 12th-grader at Baltimore City College. "Many people are doing research like this when they're much older, so having this whole experience before even graduating high school feels pretty good."

These four scholars were connected to this paid internship opportunity at BD through CURE Career Navigators, the final leg of the [UMB CURE Scholars Program](#), which is designed to prepare 11th- and 12th-grade students for college through mentorship, SAT prep, professional internships, and college and financial aid application support.



Markia Eubanks (left) and Ayishat Yussuf (right), both students in Cohort 1 of the UMB CURE Scholars Program, present their research on HPV and cervical cancer at Becton Dickinson.

During this eight-week internship, the scholars met with their BD mentors virtually to learn more about their respective topics, ask questions, and check in on their research progress.

Yussuf and Eubanks worked together researching how HPV and cervical cancer diagnostics and screenings were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the mentorship of Nikos Pavlidis, MSc, BSc, the vice president and general manager of Molecular Diagnostics and Women's Health at BD Lifesciences, they were able to identify barriers to access and provided recommendations for mitigating those barriers. They even had the opportunity to connect with a cervical cancer researcher in Denmark to learn about the difference between American and European forms of treatment and access to medical care.

"I was sincerely impressed with their skill and how quickly they could learn these sophisticated concepts," said Pavlidis. "When they presented their research, they were confident and professional, and they did a fantastic job."

Sindhushree Raghunandar, PhD, a staff engineer at BD, echoed Pavlidis' sentiments

about her own CURE Scholar mentees, Sanders and Buggs. They spent their internship studying data science, cybersecurity, and computer-aided design and drafting (CADD).

"I was so impressed all the way through that they took on every topic and they really digested it and made it their own and they were able to execute every task we had given them," she said.

For Buggs, a 12th-grade student at Green Street Academy, this internship inspired him to learn more about CADD and pursue engineering and design in college. He said that at the beginning of the internship he felt intimidated by computer coding, but with the help of his mentors he was able to tackle the concept very quickly.

"I truly didn't think I was going to get it on my first try," he said. "But when I did it by myself, I was so excited that I got it right. I told my parents about it, and they were proud of me too, which just hyped me up about my future in engineering."

The BD internship ended with a formal presentation from the scholars about their research and what they learned during their internship. They presented their projects to CURE faculty and staff as well as their mentors and other professional researchers at BD.

"This is truly a jumping off point for their academic and professional journeys," said Raghunandar. "Exploration early in your career is pivotal to being able to find what it is that you really get excited about, and this has given them an opportunity to be able to explore at an early age."

The rest of the students in the CURE Scholars Program also had a busy summer. The high school scholars were able to take advantage of summer internships at several places including the University of Maryland Medical Center, CodeWorks, YES Program, APL ASPIRE internship, and CURE's Vaccine Hesitancy study. Meanwhile, the middle school scholars participated in virtual summer programming led by their teachers, mentors, and students, faculty, and staff from the UMB schools.

CURE's regular after-school programming is set to continue in October 2021.

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